

Key Results: Adults

Attitudes and Behaviour towards
Alcohol Survey 2013/14 to 2015/16

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Executive Summary

The Attitudes and Behaviour towards Alcohol Survey (ABAS) is a national survey of people aged 15 years and over about alcohol consumption patterns, alcohol-related behaviour, consequences of consuming alcohol, and attitudes. Results from the 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16 surveys were pooled to allow analysis of subpopulation groups.

This report presents descriptive results about the alcohol-related behaviours, attitudes and experiences of the 10,441 respondents in the ABAS aged 25 years and over (25+ years). This report is a companion to the *Key Results: Young People aged 15 to 24 years. Attitudes and Behaviour towards Alcohol Survey 2013/14 to 2015/16* report.¹ This report contributes towards HPA's statutory function to research the use of alcohol and public attitudes to alcohol in New Zealand and problems associated with or consequent on, alcohol misuse.

Key findings about adults aged 25+ years

- 64% of respondents aged 25+ years reported consuming alcohol in the last four weeks. A greater proportion of those aged 45 to 64 (67%) years reported drinking in the last four weeks, compared with those aged 25 to 44 years (64%) and 65+ years (59%).
- 23% of respondents who reported drinking in the last four weeks also reported risky drinking behaviour.² A greater proportion of respondents aged 25 to 44 years (35%) reported risky drinking behaviour, compared with those aged 45 to 64 years (19%) and 65+ years (7%).
- A greater proportion of males consumed alcohol in the last four weeks (69%) and reported risky drinking behaviour over the last four weeks (30%), compared with females (59% and 15%, respectively).
- Although a greater proportion of European/Other respondents reported drinking in the last four weeks than any other ethnic group, more Pacific (45%) and Māori (41%) respondents reported risky drinking behaviour, compared with European/Other respondents (20%). One driver of the difference for Māori and Pacific will be their younger age distribution than European/Other.
- The majority of respondents reported “feeling good, happy or relaxed” (81%) and “was able to de-stress, wind down” (68%) as a consequence of drinking alcohol in the last four weeks.
- However, 17% of respondents reported at least one experience after drinking alcohol in the last four weeks that may be considered harmful, with more males (21%) than females (12%) reporting this.
- 16% of respondents agreed with the statement “It’s OK to get drunk as long as it’s not every day” and 13% agreed with the statement “Drunkenness is acceptable in some situations”, with significantly fewer respondents agreeing with increasing age group. A

¹ The companion report can be found at <http://www.hpa.org.nz/research-library/research-publications>.

² For those aged 25+ years, the ABAS defines ‘risky drinking’ as seven or more drinks on any one occasion.

greater proportion of respondents who reported risky drinking behaviour agreed with these statements, compared with those who did not report risky drinking behaviour.

- 53% of respondents agreed with the statement “Binge drinking is part of Kiwi culture”.

Introduction

The Attitudes and Behaviour towards Alcohol Survey (ABAS) is a national survey of people aged 15 years and over about alcohol consumption patterns, alcohol-related behaviour, consequences of consuming alcohol, and attitudes. The survey focuses on behaviour in the previous month and on the last drinking occasion and includes questions on a range of attitudes and opinions towards alcohol.

Results from the survey are used to inform the planning and development of alcohol activities, policies and programmes that aim to reduce alcohol-related harm in New Zealand. This report also contributes towards HPA's statutory function to research the use of alcohol and public attitudes to alcohol in New Zealand and problems associated with or consequent on, alcohol misuse.

This report

This report presents descriptive results from the combined 2013/14, 2014/15, and 2015/16 ABAS for the adult New Zealand population aged 25 years and over (25+ years). Information is provided on their drinking behaviour, attitudes to drinking, and experiences as a result of drinking.

The main focus of this report is to describe and compare results for those aged 25 to 44, 45 to 64, and 65+ years. The drinking behaviours and experiences results are presented for adults who reported consuming alcohol in the last four weeks. Attitude results are presented for all respondents aged 25+ years. Changes over the survey years have been reported so that it is clear if the average value over the three-year period is a suitable estimate or not. All results presented in this report are weighted so that they represent the total New Zealand population aged 15 years and over.

This publication is the companion document to the *Key Results: Young People aged 15 to 24 years*.³

³ Health Promotion Agency. (2017). *Key Results: Young People aged 15-24 years. Attitudes and Behaviour towards Alcohol Survey 2013/14 to 2015/16*. Wellington: Health Promotion Agency.

Method

ABAS is a nationwide telephone survey of all usually resident New Zealanders aged 15 years and over. For each survey, approximately 4,000 people aged 15 years and over were surveyed over four months – November, December, January, and February.

Households were stratified into telephone directory regions. A random sample of telephone numbers was generated from all number ranges found in the White Pages using a Random Digit Dialling (RDD) approach. The mode of the interview was Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI).

A full description of each year's methods, questionnaires, and further ABAS publications can be found at <http://www.hpa.org.nz/research-library/research-publications>.

Adults aged 25+ analysis

HPA pooled the 2013/14, 2014/15, 2015/16 ABAS datasets in order to allow reliable analysis of population subgroups within the dataset, such as those aged 25+ years. A full description of the pooled datasets methods can be found at <http://www.hpa.org.nz/research-library/research-publications>.

In total there were 12,206 responses across the 2013/14, 2014/15, and 2015/16 surveys. Respondents provided their age during the survey at two different times. Only those respondents whose stated age in years matched their stated age group category were included for analysis.⁴ There were 10,441 responses from those aged 25+ years (Table 1).

Table 1: ABAS sample size numbers for respondents aged 25+ years, by age group, 2013/14 to 2015/16

Year	Survey sample size	Aged 25-44 years	Aged 45-64 years	Aged 65+ years	Total aged 25+ years
2013/14	4,001	1,445	1,235	822	3,502
2014/15	4,005	1,347	1,234	929	3,510
2015/16	4,200	1,369	1,209	851	3,429
Total	12,206	4,161	3,678	2,602	10,441

⁴ Only those respondents that stated their age was 25 years or more and their age group was other than 15-17 or 18-24 were included for analysis. This resulted in 18 people being excluded from the analysis.

The data have been weighted (adjusted) so that the sample reflects the makeup of the New Zealand population at the last 2013 Census. Results are presented as weighted estimates with error bars representing 95% confidence intervals.

Logistic regression was used to compare responses between groups with 95% confidence intervals generated using jackknife methods. The significance level used for statistical analysis was set to 5%.

Ethnicity groups were prioritised in the order of: Māori, Pacific, Asian, and European/Other.

Differences across the three survey years

Comparisons over the three survey years were conducted. Where there was no significant difference across the survey years, the estimate provided in these results can be interpreted as an average estimate for the time period 2013/14 to 2015/16. Where there were significant differences across the survey years, this is noted and caution needs to be taken in applying the estimate to the whole period from 2013/14 to 2015/16.

Results

Of the 10,441 respondents, 5,714 (54%) were female and 4,727 (45%) were male. The majority (70%) were European/Other, followed by Māori (16%), Asian (7.4%) and Pacific (6.3%) respondents. Forty percent were aged 25 to 44 years, 35% were aged 45 to 64 years, and 25% were aged 65+ years.

The demographic characteristics of respondents aged 25+ years are outlined in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of ABAS respondents aged 25+ years, by age group, 2013/14 to 2015/16

		Aged 25-44 years		Aged 45-64 years		Aged 65+ years	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Total		4,161		3,678		2,602	
Gender	Female	2,430	58	1,980	54	1,304	50
	Male	1,731	42	1,698	46	1,298	50
Prioritised ethnicity	Māori	825	20	585	16	247	9
	Pacific	384	9	216	6	59	2
	Asian	537	13	190	5	43	2
	European/Other	2,415	58	2,687	73	2,253	87

Alcohol consumption

Overall, 73% of respondents aged 25+ years reported consuming alcohol in the last year, and 27% were non-drinkers. Sixty-four percent reported consuming alcohol in the last four weeks.

There were significant differences between the following groups:

- A greater proportion of males (69%) reported drinking alcohol in the last four weeks, compared with females (59%).
- A smaller proportion of Māori (60%), Pacific (45%), and Asian (36%) respondents reported drinking in the last four weeks, compared with European/Other respondents (70%).
- Compared with those aged 25 to 44 years (64%), a slightly greater proportion of those aged 45 to 64 years (67%) reported drinking in the last four weeks, and a smaller proportion of those aged 65+ years (59%) reported drinking in the last four weeks.

There was a significant decline in reported alcohol consumption across the three survey years. A significantly smaller proportion of respondents reported drinking alcohol in the last year in 2015/16 (71%) than in both 2013/14 (73%) and 2014/15 (74%). Similarly, a significantly smaller proportion of respondents reported drinking in the last four weeks in 2015/16 (62%) than in 2014/15 (65%).

Risky drinking behaviour in the last four weeks

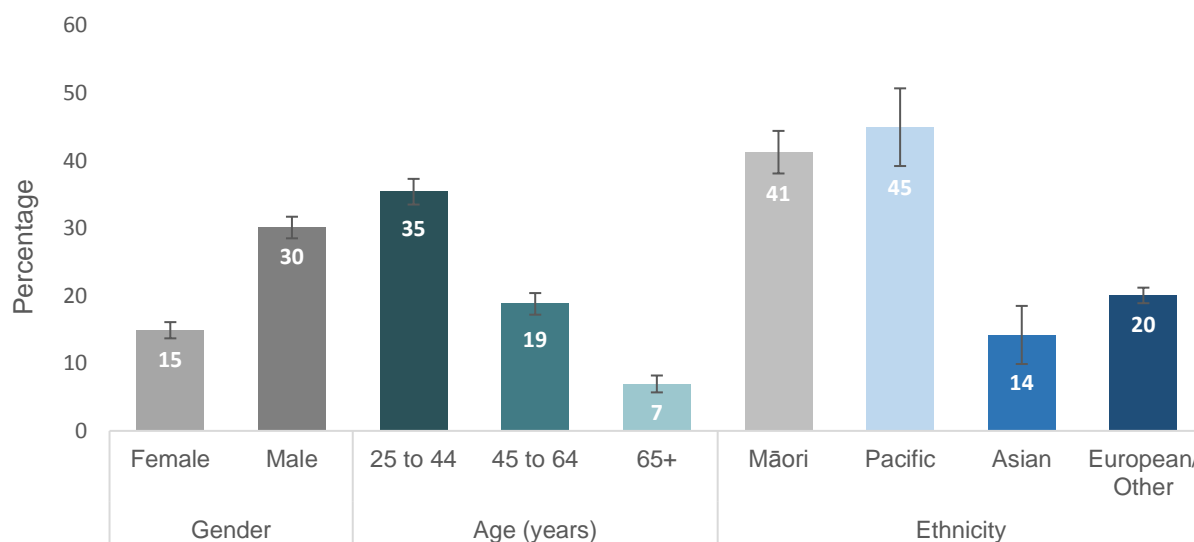
In this survey, HPA conservatively defined 'risky drinking' as seven or more drinks on any one occasion for adults aged 18 years and over.⁵

Overall, 15% of all respondents aged 25+ years, or 23% of those that consumed alcohol in the last four weeks, reported risky drinking behaviour.

There were significant differences between the following groups (Figure 1):

- A greater proportion of males (30%) reported risky drinking behaviour in the last four weeks, compared with females (15%).
- Compared with European/Other respondents (20%), a greater proportion of Pacific (45%) and Māori (41%) respondents reported risky drinking behaviour in the last four weeks, and a smaller proportion of Asian respondents (14%) reported risky drinking behaviour in the last four weeks. One driver of the difference for Māori and Pacific will be their younger age distribution than European/Other.
- A greater proportion of those aged 25 to 44 years (35%) reported risky drinking behaviour in the last four weeks, compared with those aged 45 to 64 years (19%) and 65+ years (7%).

Figure 1: Risky drinking behaviour, reported by those who drank in the last four weeks, aged 25+ years, by gender, age group and ethnicity, 2013/14 to 2015/16



Base: Drank alcohol in the last four weeks, $n = 6,636$

Source: ABAS 2013/14 to 2015/16

⁵ This definition of risky drinking is higher than HPA's low-risk alcohol drinking advice for an occasion. See <http://www.alcohol.org.nz/help-advice/advice-on-alcohol/low-risk-alcohol-drinking-advice>

There were no significant differences in reported risky drinking behaviour across the three survey years for those aged 25+ years.

Number of drinks consumed on the last occasion

Respondents who had consumed two or more drinks on any one occasion in the last three months were asked about the last occasion they did so. The results in this section relate to this last drinking occasion.

Fifty-four percent of all respondents aged 25+ years drank two or more drinks on the last occasion in the last three months. Of these, the majority (66%) drank between two and four drinks.

There were significant differences between the following groups:

- A greater proportion of males (62%) drank two or more drinks on the last occasion, compared with females (47%).
- A smaller proportion of those aged 65+ years (42%) drank two or more drinks on the last occasion, compared with those aged 25 to 44 years (58%) (Table 3).
- A greater proportion of those aged 25 to 44 years drank at least eight on the last occasion, compared with the other age groups, and a smaller proportion drank two to four drinks, compared with other age groups (Table 3).
- A greater proportion of males drank five to seven drinks (21%) and at least eight drinks (18%) on the last occasion, compared with females (17% and 11%, respectively). A greater proportion of females (72%) drank two to four drinks on the last occasion, compared with males (61%).
- A greater proportion of Māori and Pacific respondents drank at least eight drinks and a smaller proportion drank two to four drinks, compared with European/Other respondents (Figure 2).

Table 3: Number of drinks consumed on the last drinking occasion, by age group, 2013/14 to 2015/16

		25-44 years % (95% CI)	45-64 years % (95% CI)	65+ years % (95% CI)	25+ years % (95% CI)
Consumed 2+ drinks on any one drinking occasion in the last three months¹		58 ^R (57, 60)	57 (55, 58)	42* (40, 44)	54 (53, 55)
Number of drinks at the last drinking occasion²	2 to 4 drinks	55 ^R (53, 57)	70* (68, 72)	86* (83, 88)	66 (65, 68)
	5 to 7 drinks	21 ^R (19, 23)	20 (18, 22)	11* (9, 13)	19 (18, 20)
	8+ drinks	24 ^R (22, 26)	10* (9, 12)	4* (2, 5)	15 (14,16)

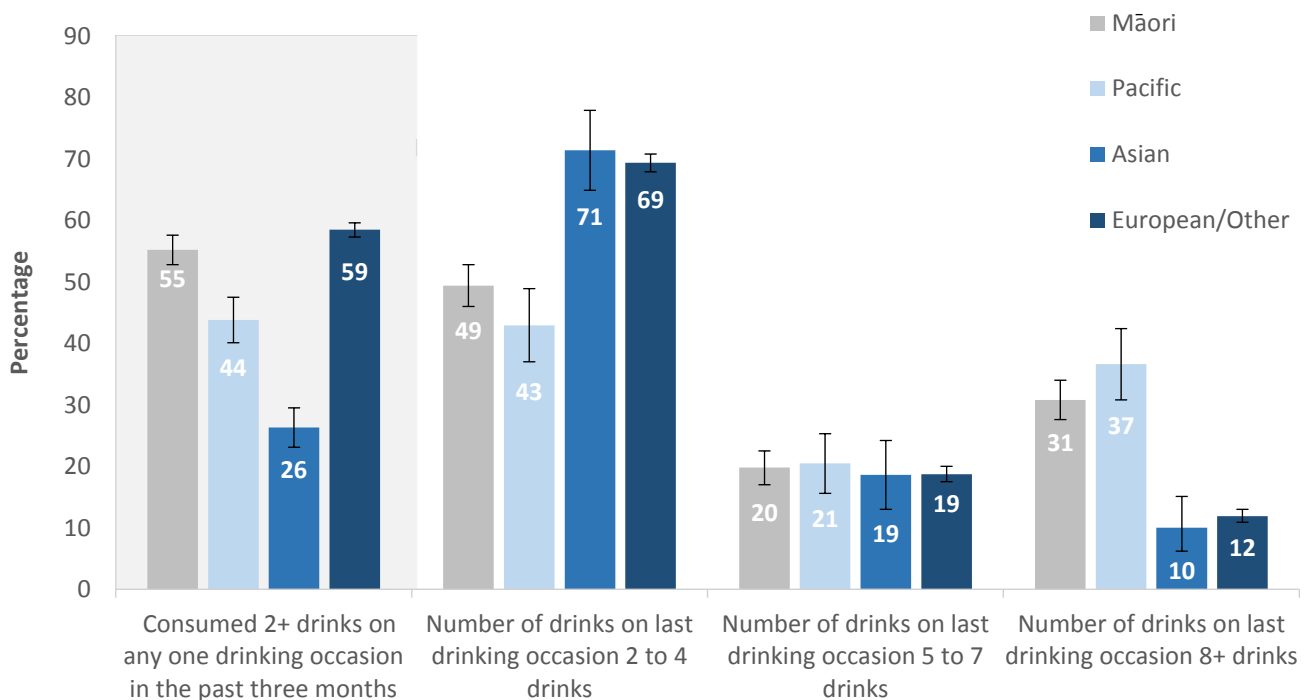
¹ All respondents, n=10,441

² For those respondents who had consumed two or more drinks on any one drinking occasion in the last three months, n = 5,358

* Significantly different from the reference group (R; 25 to 44 years age group)

Source: ABAS 2013/14 to 2015/16

Figure 2: Number of drinks consumed by those aged 25+ years on the last drinking occasion, by ethnicity, 2013/14 to 2015/16



Base 'Consumed 2+ drinks on any one occasion in the past three months', All respondents, n = 10,441

Base 'Number of drinks on last drinking occasion ...', n = 5,358

Source: ABAS 2013/14 to 2015/16

There were significant differences in number of drinks consumed at the last drinking occasion across the three survey years. More respondents reported consuming 2+ drinks on the last

occasion in 2013/14 (55%) and 2014/15 (55%), compared with 2015/16 (52%). Further, more respondents reported consuming between 2 to 4 drinks on the last occasion in 2013/14 (68%), compared with 2015/16 (64%). There were no other significant differences across the three survey years.

Experiences after drinking alcohol

Those respondents who reported drinking alcohol in the last four weeks were asked if they had personally experienced any of a range of consequences after drinking alcohol.

Similarly to those aged under 25 years,⁶ the most common experiences reported were “feeling good, happy, relaxed” (81%) and “was able to de-stress, wind down” (68%). A greater proportion of respondents aged 25 to 44 reported each of the experiences, compared with those aged 45 to 64 years and 65+ years (see Table 4).

For this report, HPA has categorised experiences as harmful where they may potentially result in harmful physical, social or emotional outcomes.⁷ These were not necessarily reported as harmful by the respondents. Overall, 17% of respondents aged 25+ years reported at least one experience that may be considered harmful as a consequence of drinking alcohol in the last four weeks (see Table 4).

There were significant differences between the following groups:

- A greater proportion of males (21%) reported at least one harmful experience, compared with females (12%).
- Most of the experiences were reported more often by males than females. The exceptions were “feeling good, happy, relaxed”, “was able to de-stress, wind down”, and “got into a fight”,⁸ where there were no significant differences between males and females.
- A smaller proportion of those aged 65+ years reported all of the experiences, compared with those aged 25 to 44 years (Table 4).
- A greater proportion of Pacific (33%) and Māori (25%) respondents reported at least one harmful experience, compared with European/Other (15%) respondents. Again, one driver of the differences for Māori and Pacific may be their younger age distribution than European/Other.
- A greater proportion of those aged 25 to 44 years (23%) reported at least one potentially harmful experience, compared with both the 45 to 64 years (14%) and 65+ years (11%) age groups.

⁶ Health Promotion Agency. (2017). *Key Results: Young People aged 15-24 years. Attitudes and Behaviour towards Alcohol Survey 2013/14 to 2015/16*. Wellington: Health Promotion Agency.

⁷ HPA has categorised the following experiences as harmful for the purposes of this report: ‘Spent too much money on alcohol’; ‘Did something embarrassing that you later regretted’; ‘Drove a vehicle while being unsure of how much you were under the influence of alcohol’; ‘Injured yourself accidentally’; ‘Failed to meet family, work or study commitments or responsibilities’; ‘Felt unsafe or put yourself into a position where you felt unsafe or uncomfortable’; ‘Got into a fight’; ‘Got into a regrettable sexual encounter’.

⁸ The absence of a significant difference for fighting may result from the statistical difficulty of reliably detecting such differences with very low percentages.

- Despite a smaller proportion overall of Asian respondents consuming two or more drinks on the last occasion, and similar proportions consuming the same number of drinks as European/Other respondents, a significantly greater proportion of Asian (21%) respondents reported at least one harmful experience, compared with European/Other respondents (15%) (Figure 3). One driver of the differences for Asian may be their younger age distribution than European/Other.
- Most of the experiences were reported more often by Māori and Pacific respondents, compared with European/Other respondents (with the older distribution of European/Other presumably contributing to those differences). The exceptions were “injured yourself accidentally” and “got into a fight”, where there were no significant differences between Pacific and European/Other respondents.

Table 4: Experiences after drinking alcohol in the last four weeks, by age group, 2013/14 to 2015/16

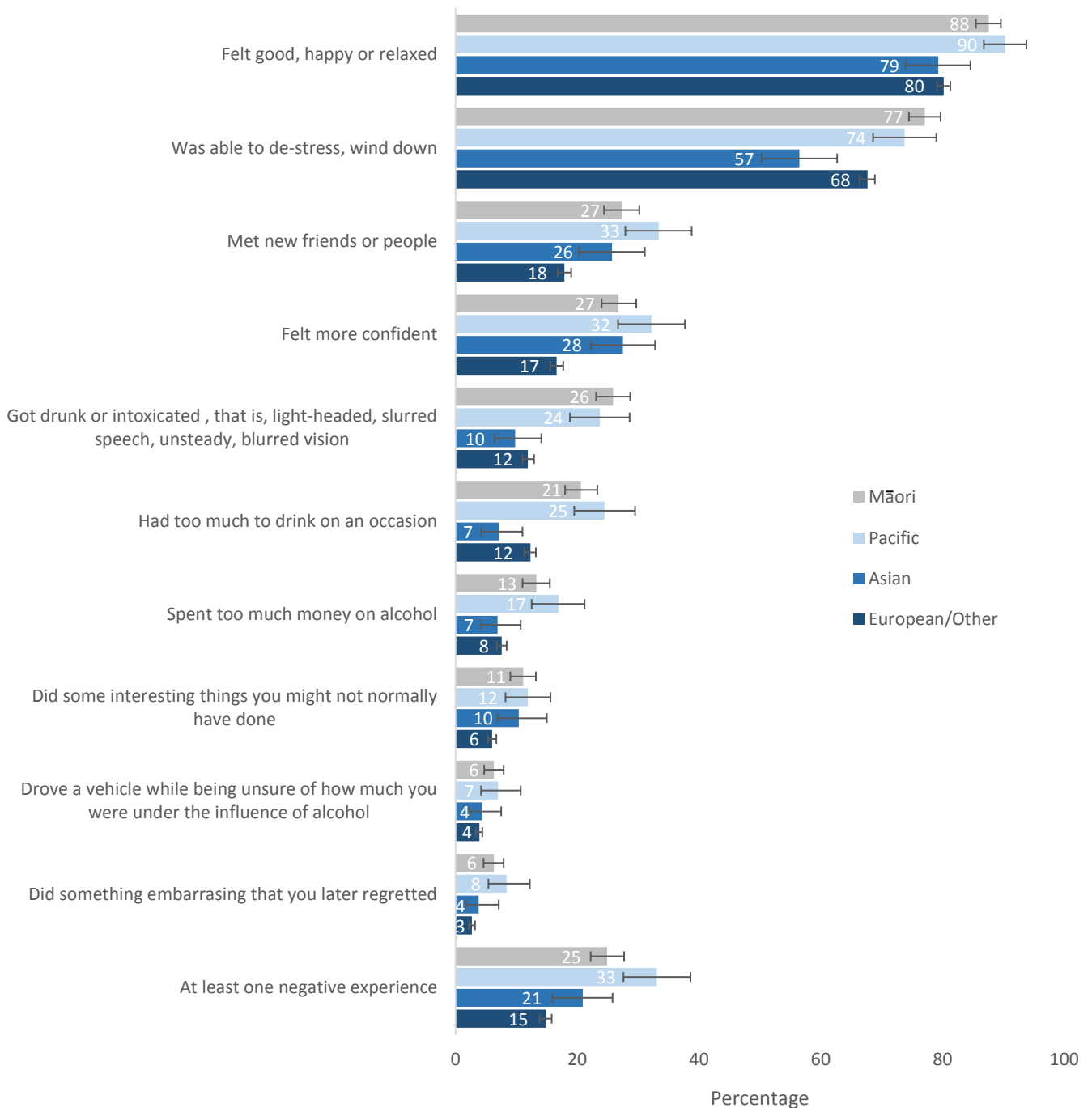
	25-44 years % (95% CI)	45-64 years % (95% CI)	65+ years % (95% CI)	Total 25+ years % (95% CI)
Felt good, happy or relaxed	87.9 (86.6, 89.3)	81.2* (79.6, 82.8)	68.9* (66.5, 71.2)	81.2 (80.2, 82.2)
Was able to de-stress, wind down	78.5 (76.9, 80.2)	68.6* (66.7, 70.5)	48.4* (45.9, 50.9)	68.2 (67, 69.3)
Met new friends or people	25.5 (23.8, 27.3)	17* (15.5, 18.6)	14.7* (12.9, 16.5)	19.8 (18.8, 20.8)
Felt more confident	27.7 (25.9, 29.5)	15.2* (13.7, 16.6)	9.7* (8.2, 11.2)	18.9 (17.9, 19.9)
Got drunk or intoxicated, that is, light-headed, slurred speech, unsteady, blurred vision	23.4 (21.8, 25.1)	10.3* (9, 11.5)	2* (1.3, 2.7)	13.6 (12.8, 14.5)
Had too much to drink on an occasion	18.9 (17.3, 20.4)	12.8* (11.4, 14.2)	3.7* (2.7, 4.6)	13.2 (12.4, 14.1)
Spent too much money on alcohol	12.5 (11.1, 13.8)	6.8* (5.8, 7.8)	4.2* (3.2, 5.2)	8.4 (7.8, 9.1)
Did some interesting things you might not normally have done	10.6 (9.4, 11.9)	5.3* (4.4, 6.3)	3.7* (2.7, 4.6)	7 (6.4, 7.7)
Drove a vehicle while being unsure of how much you were under the influence of alcohol	5.3 (4.4, 6.3)	4* (3.2, 4.8)	2.7* (1.9, 3.5)	4.2 (3.7, 4.7)
Did something embarrassing that you later regretted	5.6 (4.6, 6.5)	2.4* (1.8, 3.1)	0.9* (0.5, 1.5)	3.3 (2.9, 3.8)
Failed to meet family, work or study commitments or responsibilities	4 (3.2, 4.8)	2* (1.5, 2.6)	1.8* (1.1, 2.7)	2.7 (2.3, 3.1)
Injured yourself accidentally (that is, tripped over, accidental harm)	3.5 (2.7, 4.2)	1.7* (1.2, 2.2)	2* (1.3, 2.7)	2.5 (2.1, 2.8)
Felt unsafe or put yourself into a position where you felt unsafe or uncomfortable	1.7 (1.1, 2.2)	1.1 (0.7, 1.6)	0.4* (0.2, 0.9)	1.2 (0.9, 1.5)
Got into a fight (violence or aggression)	1.1 (0.7, 1.6)	0.6 (0.3, 1)	0.1* (0, 0.5)	0.7 (0.5, 0.9)
Got into a regrettable sexual encounter	0.7 (0.4, 1.2)	0.5 (0.2, 0.8)	0.1* (0, 0.4)	0.5 (0.3, 0.7)
At least one harmful experience	23.2 (21.5, 24.9)	14.1* (12.7, 15.5)	10.5* (8.9, 12.1)	16.9 (15.9, 17.8)

* Significantly different from the reference group (R; 25 to 44 years age group).

Base: Drank alcohol in the last four weeks, $n = 6,636$

Source: ABAS 2013/14 to 2015/16

Figure 3: Most common experiences after drinking alcohol in the last four weeks, by ethnicity, 2013/14 to 2015/16



Base: Drank alcohol in the last four weeks, $n = 6,636$

Source: ABAS 2013/14 to 2015/16

In 2015/16, a significantly greater proportion of respondents aged 25+ years reported that they “felt more confident” (21%), “did some interesting things they might not have normally done” (8%), and “failed to meet family, work or study commitments or responsibilities” (4%), compared with 2014/15 (18%, 6%, and 2%, respectively). There were no other significant differences across the three survey years for the other common experiences.

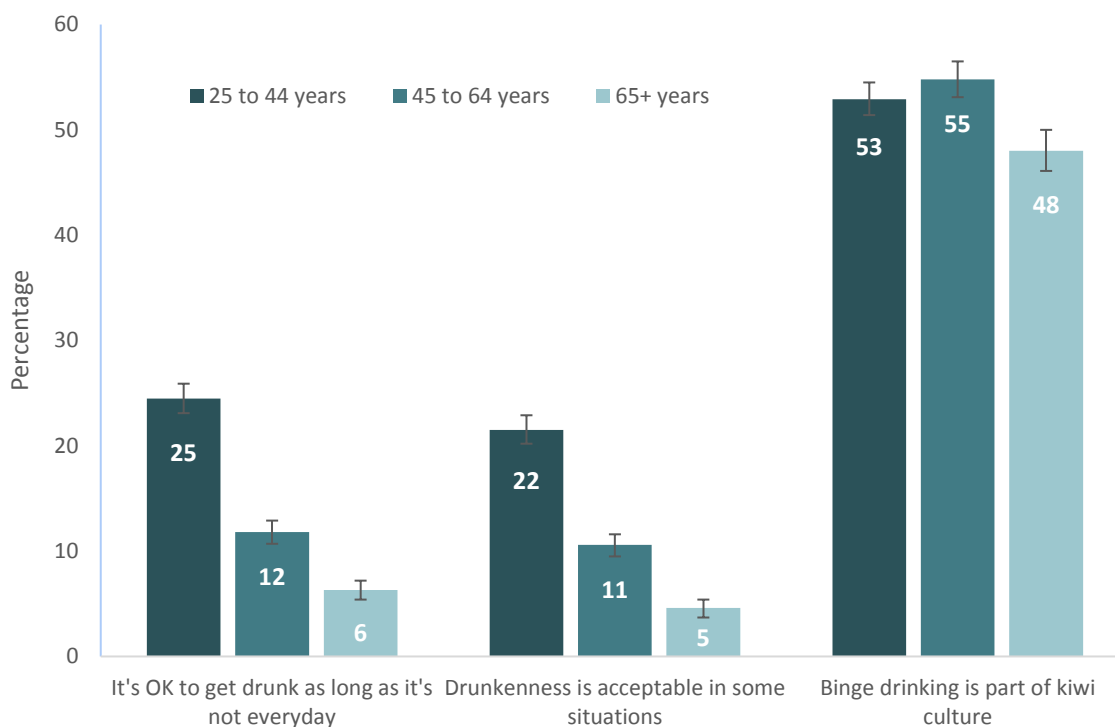
Attitudes to drinking alcohol

All respondents were asked for their level of agreement with three statements about drinking in New Zealand. Responses to the three statements used a 5-point scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. In this report, 'strongly agree' and 'agree' responses have been combined to an overall 'agree' category.

Overall, 16% of those aged 25+ years agreed with the statement "It's OK to get drunk as long as it's not every day" and 13% of respondents aged 25+ years agreed with the statement "Drunkenness is acceptable in some situations", with significantly smaller proportions of New Zealanders agreeing with increasing age group (Figure 4).

Overall, 53% of those aged 25+ years agreed with the statement "Binge drinking is part of Kiwi culture".⁹ A significantly smaller proportion of those aged 65+ years agreed with this statement, compared with those aged 25 to 44 years (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Respondents who agree or strongly agree with three attitudes statements, by age group, 2013/14 to 2015/16



Base: All respondents, $n = 10,441$
Source: ABAS 2013/14 to 2015/16

⁹ No definition was provided for "binge drinking"; respondents defined this for themselves.

There were significant differences between the following groups:

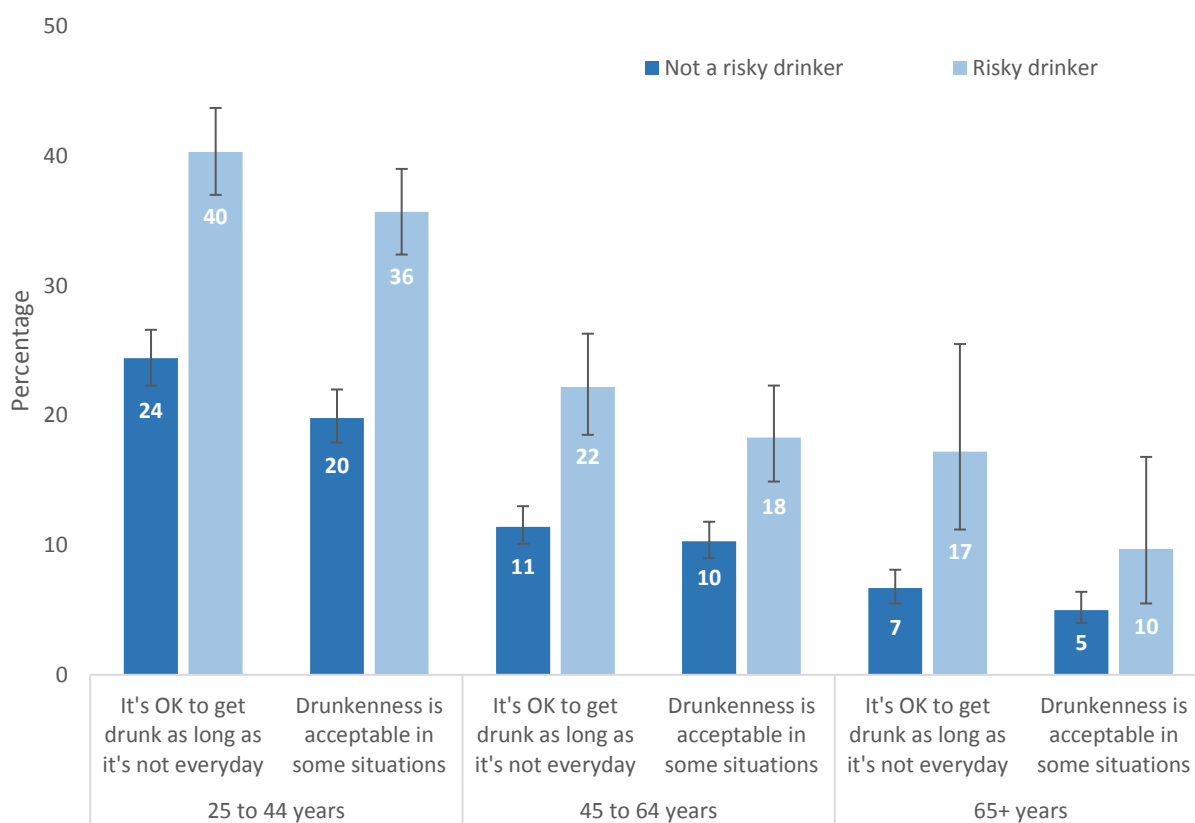
- A greater proportion of males agreed with the two statements “It’s OK to get drunk as long as it’s not every day” (18%) and “Drunkenness is acceptable in some situations” (16%), compared with females (14% and 11%, respectively). However, a slightly greater proportion of females agreed with “Binge drinking is part of Kiwi culture” (54%), compared with males (51%).
- A greater proportion of Māori (22%) and Pacific (22%) respondents agreed that “It’s OK to get drunk as long as it’s not every day”, compared with European/Other (15%) respondents. A greater proportion of Māori respondents (16%) also agreed that “Drunkenness is acceptable in some situations”, compared with European/Other (13%) respondents.
- A smaller proportion of Pacific (38%) and Asian (43%) respondents agreed that “Binge drinking is part of Kiwi culture”, compared with European/Other (55%) respondents.

There were some significant differences across the three survey years. Agreement with the statement “It’s OK to get drunk as long as it’s not every day” increased significantly from 2013/14 (15%) and 2014/15 (14%) to 2015/16 (17%). On the other hand, agreement with the statement “Binge drinking is part of Kiwi culture” dropped significantly from 2013/14 (54%) to 2015/16 (51%).

Not surprisingly, there were some significant differences in attitudes between those who reported risky drinking behaviour in the last four weeks and those who did not (Figure 5).

- A much greater proportion of respondents aged 25+ years who reported risky drinking behaviour (33%) agreed with the statement “It’s OK to get drunk as long as it’s not everyday”, compared with those who did not report risky drinking behaviour (14%).
- A much greater proportion of respondents aged 25+ years who reported risky drinking behaviour (28%) agreed with the statement “Drunkenness is acceptable in some situations”, compared with those who did not report risky drinking behaviour (12%).

Figure 5: Drinkers who agree or strongly agree with three attitude statements, by reported risky drinking behaviour and age group, 2013/14 to 2015/2016



Base: Drank alcohol in the last four weeks, $n = 6,636$

Source: ABAS 2013/14 to 2015/16